Benedikt Gröndal

Handwriting Models

An Icelandic manual, 1883

OPERINA

BENEDIKT GRÖNDAL Sveinbjarnarson (1826–1907) was an Icelandic poet, a naturalist and literary historian. After a master's degree in Scandinavian Studies from the University of Copenhagen in 1863, he taught, wrote, and published a periodical, *Gefn*. His humorous *Heljarslóðarorrusta* (1861) made his countrymen laugh until their sides ached.

He was also a gifted painter, draftsman and calligrapher.

TERMS OF LICENSE

You are permitted to download and use this Work for scholarship, research and your own personal uses only. It is NOT shareware. Reverse engineering, converting to other formats, reselling, embedding all or part of this Work or any part thereof into programs or other works that are used, licensed or sold on a "for sale" and /or for a profit basis, are each strictly prohibited. If you are not sure whether your use may be prohibited please send an email to operina@gmail.com.

Copyright 2007 Operina LLC. All Rights Reserved.

By using this Work you expressly agree that its use and information presented in it is without representation or warranty of any kind, including any representation of accuracy, fitness for use or non-infringement. USE OF ANY MATERIALS, IMAGES OR INFORMATION IN THIS WORK IS EXPRESSLY AT YOUR OWN RISK.

Benedikt Gröndal

Handwriting

An Icelandic manual, 1883

Models

With an introduction by
Gunnlaugur SE Briem

OPERINA

Copyright © 2007 Operina LLC, Emeryville, California. All Rights Reserved.

Reproduced by kind permission of the Icelandic National Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Benedikt Gröndal, 1826–1907.
[Forskriftir]
Handwriting models : an Icelandic manual, 1883 / Benedikt Gröndal .
p. cm.
Originally published: Forskriftir. Kaupmannahöfn : Kr. Ó. Þorgrímsson, 1883. With an introduction by Gunnlaugur S.E. Briem.
ISBN 978-1-934227-19-0 (hardcover)
ISBN 978-1-934227-20-6 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-934227-21-3 (digital)
1. Copybooks--Iceland. 2. Icelandic language--Alphabet. 3. Icelandic language--Writing. I. Title.
Z43.B42 2007
745.6'1--dc22

2007032419

PUBLISHED BY
Operina LLC
<operina.com> operina@gmail.com

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Gunnlaugur SE Briem

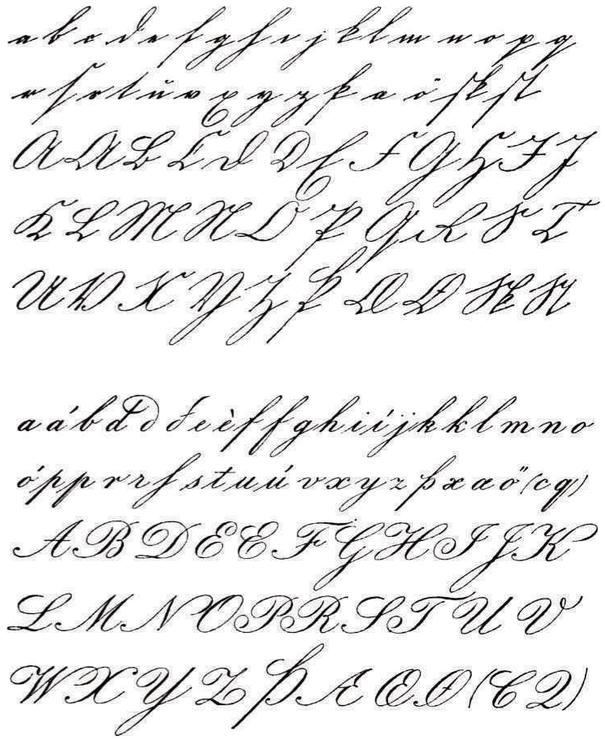
Introduction

It was a good year for common sense. In 1875, Denmark changed handwriting models, replacing blackletter cursive by copperplate. This extended to its Icelandic dominion, where copybooks and model sheets in the new style were in short supply. Eight years later, a much needed handwriting manual by Benedikt Gröndal was published.

The old style and the new are similar in appearance but have different letterforms.

Before and after
The upper of these samples is blackletter cursive. The lower is copperplate. Both were written with a pointed pen. The two styles look alike at first glance, although most of the letterforms are different.

From *Almanak Hins íslenzka þjóðvinafélags*, Copenhagen 1877.



Before 1875
The blackletter cursive letters K e x don't look familiar to the average reader.

After 1875
In comparison, the same letters, written in copperplate, are easily recognized.

A new beginning

IN THE EARLY fifteenth century, Florentine scholars started writing a new style that we now call italic. The lower case letters included elements of Carolingian minuscule. The capitals were inspired by classical Roman inscriptions, even including serifs that are hard to write with a broad-edge pen.

For a while it was the handwriting of scholars who corresponded in Latin, of royalty and diplomats, and the regular style of the papal chancery. In humbler parts of society, merchants and lawyers still wrote a blackletter cursive, the *mercantesa*.

Italic developed faster than many other styles. In less than a century and a half, it germinated, flowered, and went to

Late chancery cursive
Even Hugo da Carpi's excellent woodcuts cannot reproduce Ludovico Arrighi's graceful hand. At this stage, italic had lost its early vigor and entered a mannerist stage of restricted joins and bulb terminals.

From *La Operina*, Rome 1522.

Transition
Giovan Francesco Cresci was probably the most famous writing master of his time. He led a movement away from the late, mannerist stages of chancery italic to early copperplate, a new style that swept the world.

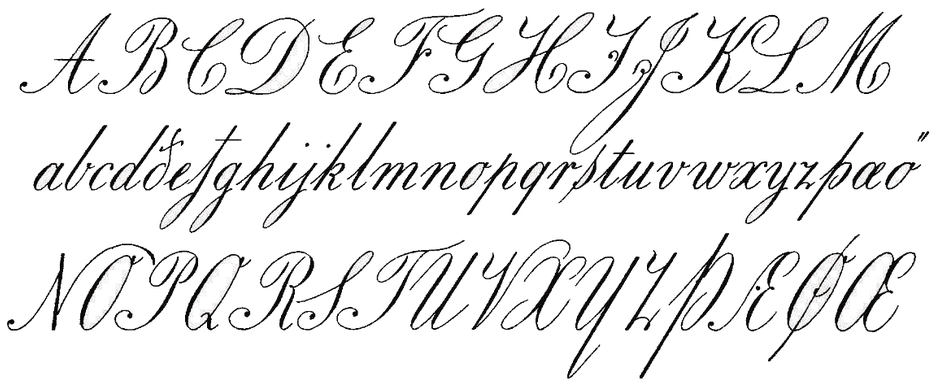
From *Il perfetto scrittore*, Rome 1570.

► seed. One reason may be that it wasn't used by a great number of people. It was fashionable rather than popular.

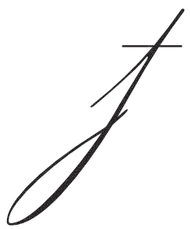
AS TIME passed, it gained decorative loops and flourishes. It slanted more. The letterforms became more curved. New joins were added. But instead of fading into obscurity and disuse, it blossomed as a new style, the copperplate.

Flexible
Joseph Champion's model has alternative letters. It also offers both looped and straight ascenders. From *The Universal Penman*, London 1733–41.

Copperplate was the handwriting of the British empire, its administration, commerce and industry. Well-trained clerks produced legible documents, neat in appearance, and fast.



Unusual variants
Benedikt Gröndal's handsome copperplate model has a few singular lettershapes. The letter f has a crossbar, slightly higher than on the letter t. The letter s is uncommonly tall. The letter ð is a disgrace.



Eccentric
This letter f is not easily recognized except in context.

Normal
This lettershape is unmistakable: a conventional descender and a loop before the exit stroke.

Out of the past
Since the middle of the seventeenth century, the descender of the copperplate letter f has turned to the right at the bottom. Benedikt Gröndal's descender turns to the left.

Ðð

Endangered character
The letter ð (eth) is used in Icelandic, Faeroese and old English, where it and the letter thorn (Þþ) were largely interchangeable.

Misshapen
The ascender bends in the wrong direction. The crossbar is wavy, with terminal bulbs at both ends.

Correct
The ascender has a clean sweep to the left in an unbroken curve from the baseline. The crossbar is straight.

The eccentric letter ð lasted for a century. The ascender curve was taught until italic handwriting was introduced in Icelandic schools.

RASMUS Christian Rask, the great Danish philologist, is best known for much valuable work on the relationship of Indo-European languages. He was master of at least twenty-five languages and dialects, and contributed, among other things, to the decipherment of Persian cuneiform writing.

He wrote a grammar of the Sami language, *Ræsonneret lappisk sproglære* (Copenhagen, 1832) without having met anyone who knew it. He also discovered the connection between the languages of the Inuit in Greenland and the Unangan of the Aleut archipelago.

The Icelanders thank him for his support of the purist movement that saved the Icelandic language from extinction.

Mixed blessing
Rasmus Christian Rask encouraged Icelanders to revive the letter ð after centuries of disuse.

Unconventional
The last two pages of the *Handwriting Models* show a disappointing ronde. It may not have been familiar enough to Benedikt Gröndal. He wrote it with a pointed pen. A broad-edge pen would have been a more suitable tool.

In styles with rounded lower case bowls, the letters æ and œ (third line from the top, third and fourth letter from the right) often look too much alike. This example has a peculiar solution. The two are set apart by leaving out the exit stroke of one of them.

The letter ð, however, (top line, fifth from the left) is impeccable.

Flexible
Copperplate is written with a pointed pen. A downstroke thickens when slight pressure separates the two halves of the split tip.

This unusual pen is designed to help the writer avoid a strained wrist.

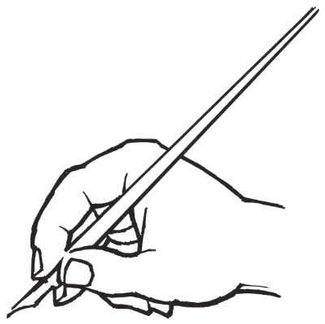
Proper
The family likeness to blackletter is obvious, especially in the capitals of this very proper Danish ronde.

From *Rundskrifts-Bogen; til Skolebrug og Hjemmeøvelse*. Nyborg, no date, probably around 1880.

Fixed
A broad edge pen makes thicks and thins without added pressure. The angle of the nib to the stroke decides how thick it becomes. This tip is divided in three, but the splits serve mainly as ink channels.

Excellence
This may well be the most handsome of all Icelandic copperplate models. It does depart from convention in the letters i, u and y. They begin with an arch, rather than with the usual entry curve, as in the letters j and p.

Jón Þórarinsson: *Skrifbók með forskriftum*, 1. hefti. Reykjavík, no date, probably around 1896.



Discipline
Here's how children were taught how to hold a copperplate pen. Three fingers grip the shaft. All four knuckles point up. The hand glides on the nails of the third and fourth fingers.

The habit did not always take hold. Many eighteenth and nineteenth century portraits show people with quill pens. Most are held the modern way, with the hand resting on its side.

Modern spirit
This model resembles the American Palmer method in many respects. It shows a rare understanding of movement in writing.

The ascender of letter ð has a proper curve but is written without a crossbar.

Steingrímur Arason: *Litla skrifbókin*. Reykjavík, 1922.

WHAT HAPPENED to copperplate? Times changed. Long entry strokes help to get the ink flowing from a dip pen. Bringing it to a halt and lifting it is actually harder than ending a stroke with an ornamental loop. Few modern fountain pens need one.

Copperplate has a narrow movement pattern. Pressure on an upstroke can stick a pointed nib into the paper and blot the page. Ballpoint pens can write in any direction.

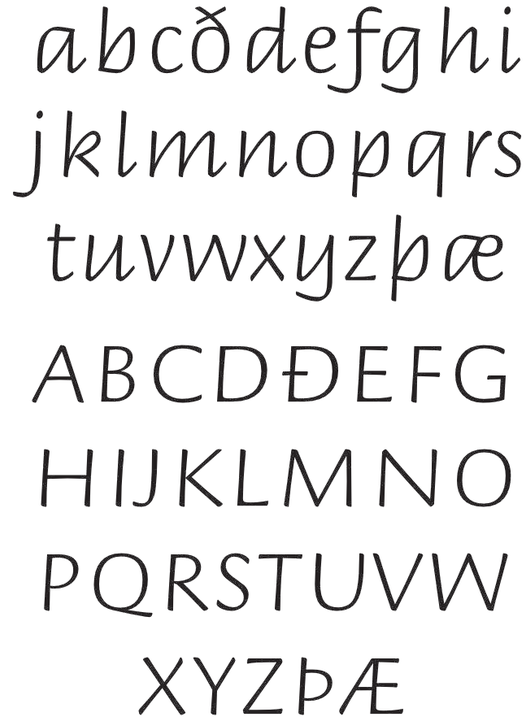
Copperplate by professional clerks looked elegant. The style was less suited to ordinary people.

Final flourish
Guðmundur I. Guðjónsson's handwriting model offered variants, two versions of the letter ð among them. His letter O was still written in the Danish manner, Ø, which had been abandoned in Icelandic typewritten documents and printed matter decades earlier.

Lower case letters from *Skrifbók*, Reykjavík, no date, probably around 1953. Capitals from *Verkefni við skriftarkennslu*, Reykjavík, no date, probably around 1939.

New beginning
Handwriting based on copperplate was largely abandoned in Icelandic schools in 1984. It was replaced by italic, a modern monoline version of renaissance handwriting that owes much to Ludovico Arrighi's approach.

A large selection of model sheets in this style is available for free download from the internet. This example shows a typeface, designed by Gunnlaugur SE Briem. It is provided free of charge to teachers who like to make their own.



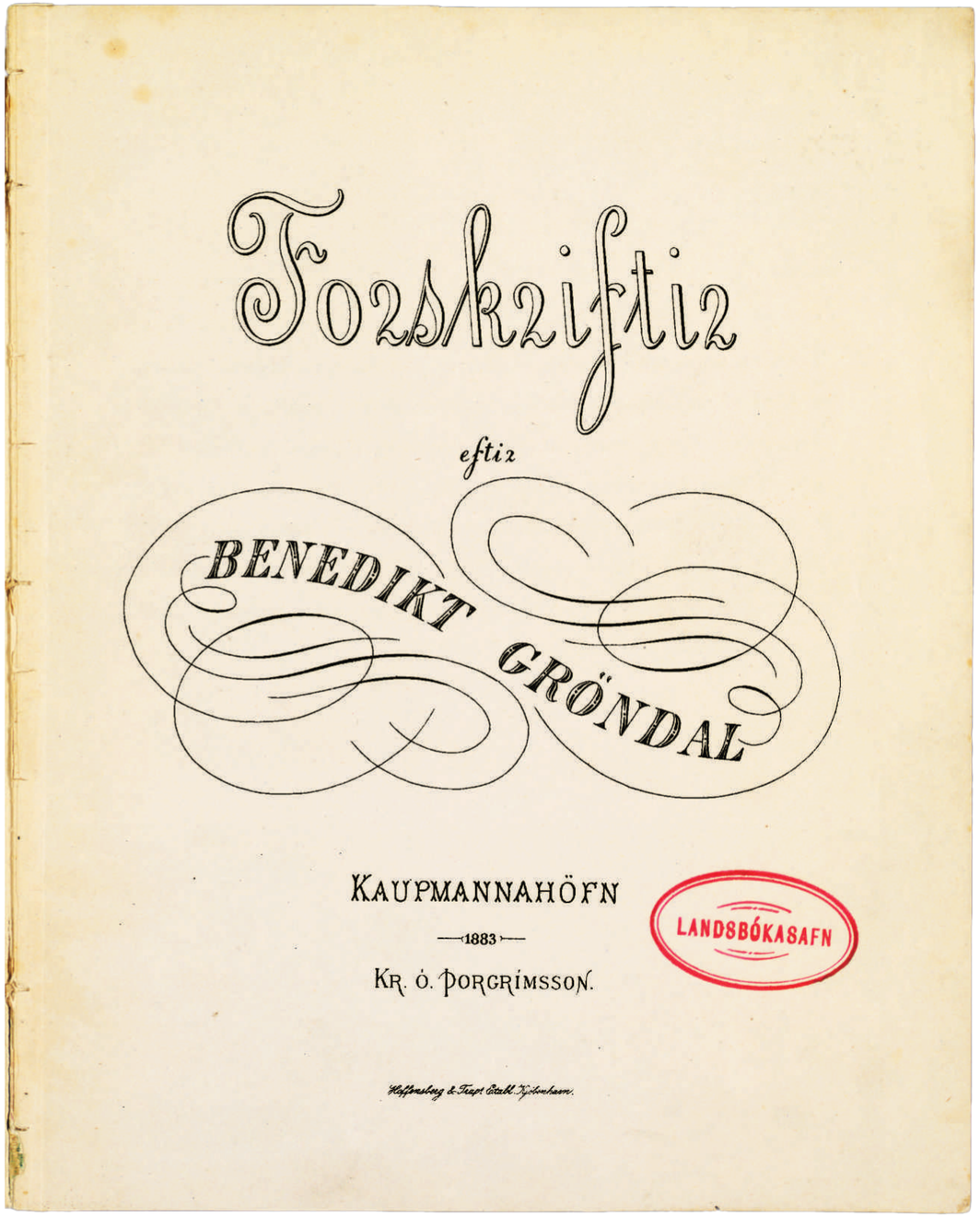
Venerable foundation
Arrighi's letters are based on a slightly slanting rectangle, 7–8°. The proportion of width to height is 3:4. The bowls of the lower case letters are based on triangles.

From *La Operina*, Rome 1522.

Benedikt Gröndal's handwriting advice

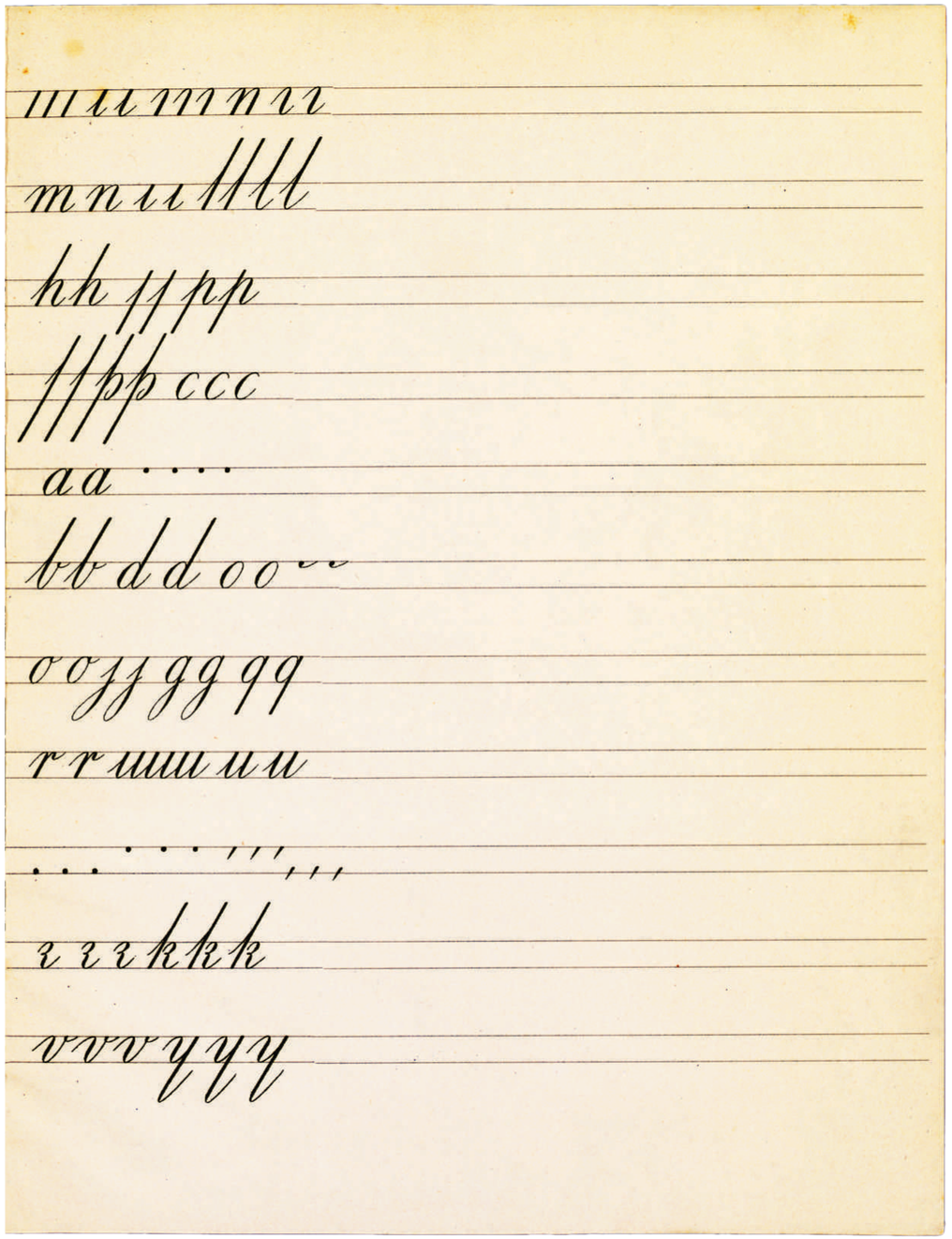
KEEP A comfortable grip on your pen; do not point it straight down, but slant it appropriately. Do not give the letters too much slope, as many models do. Make a habit of applying suitable pressure to make bold strokes. Do not use inferior or worn pens, nor too loaded with ink. Do not hurry, speed comes of its own accord. Remember to draw the entry strokes. Once you have mastered large letters, written slowly, make it your custom to write them smaller and faster. Read the words and the lines before copying them.

B.G.



Haldið á pennanum sem yður er hægast; stingið honum eigi beint niður, en hallið honum mátulega. Hallið eigi stöfunum of mikið, eins og er á mörgum forskriftum. Venjið yður á að styðja pennanum mátulega fast niður, til þess að gjöra feita drætti. Hafið eigi slæma eða slitna penna, og eigi of fulla af bleki. Flýtið yður eigi, skjótleikinn kemur af sjálfum sjer. Venjið yður vel á að draga fyrstu drættina. þegar þjer hafið tamið yður hina stóru og seinrituðu stafi, þá venjið yður á að rita stafina minni og fljótar. Lesið orðin og línurnar, áður enn þjer ritið eptir þeim.

B. G.



aaa

bbb

ccc

ddd

eee

fff

ggg

hhh

iii

jjj

kkk

lll

mmm

nnn

ooo

ppp

qqq

rrr

sss

ttt

uuu

vvv

xxx

yyy

zzz

ppp

ææ

"""

ööö

12

34

56

78

90

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvxyzpæö"ſ

abcdefghiklmnopqrstuvxyzþæöðw

inni úti nær hjer burt hjá frá þar.

nú þá við mar með niður sá sem var.

ár er um nú þó eg þú og að af æð sú.

ill hold vall nema ráða geta koma.

æfin er stutt, en mentin er löng.

allt vill lagið hafa, mundu það.

skrifaðu bæði skýrt og sett, svo

skötnum þyki á sniðli, orðin

standa eiga þétt, en þó bil á milli.

vizkan er allra landa tjós og líf.

ekkert að gjöra er illt byrjun. 12345

auðna styður öflgan hug. 67890

blindur er bóklaus maður. abcd

ekki er allt gull sem glóir. efghijkl

morgunstund hefir gull í mund.

það ungur nemur, gamall hefir.

betri er smár fenginn en stór enginn.

ekki er ráð nema í tíma sje tekið.

opt er dygð undir dökkum hárum.

úti er praut þá unnin er. opsva

A B C D E F G H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T U V X Y Z Þ Æ Ø Œ

Árni

Bjarni

Cajus

Davíð

Egill

Friðrik

Guðrún

Helga

Ingibjörg

Jón

Kristján

Lárus

Margrjet

Nikulás

Ólafur

Pjetur

Ragnheiður

Sigríður

Teitur

Una

Vigdís

Þorvaldur

Margur er knár þó hann sje smár.

A Á B D E F G H I K

M N O P Q R T U V 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Fáir eru smiðir í fyrsta sinn.

Það verður hverjum að list sem hann leikur.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRS

abcddefghijklmnopqrstuvxyzpæœöø

TUVXYZÞÆŒÖØ 1234567890

Þolimmodim þrautir vinnr allar.

Handwriting models

An Icelandic manual, 1883

BENEDIKT GRÖNDAL Sveinbjarnarson's handwriting booklet offers brief instruction in a new style that was introduced in Icelandic schools in 1875. Blackletter cursive had been replaced by the documentary hand of the British Empire.

Copperplate was written with a pointed nib and an awkward pen hold. It and the simplified versions that followed were taught to Icelandic children for over a century. Italic handwriting succeeded it in 1984.

HANDWRITING MODELS is a facsimile of the first Icelandic copperplate copybook.

Operina.com